

CASE STUDY

Information and Communication Technology for Governance (ICT4GOV) Program

Case study contributing to the “Study on Strengthening Inclusive Stakeholder Ownership through Capacity Development”

World Bank Institute Capacity Development and Results

Context

After about 80 years of colonial rule, several secessionist conflicts in the post-independence period and a long period of corruption and mismanagement under President Mobutu Sese Seko, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) entered the 1990s in a state of quasi-collapse. That decade was marked by successive episodes of increasing violence: looting by the armed forces in 1991 and again in 1993, a first conflict in 1997, and a second conflict between 1998 and 2003 during which a reported 3.5 million people died and many more were displaced. All of the mismanagement, political instability, and conflict had devastating effects on the economy.

In 2006, the successful completion of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections provided an opportunity for stabilizing the political system and addressing deep-seated governance problems. For instance, the government adopted a Governance Compact with the people of DRC. Under the compact, the government promised to work on a broad front, since improving the quality of governance is crucial to ensuring conditions for sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Among the four cross-cutting challenges outlined in the Governance Compact, the decentralization process has been one of the government’s main priorities. The government believes decentralization could contribute to building a governance system that (i) delivers effective key public services, (ii) reflects public priorities and (iii) aligns with the compact.

The 2006 Constitution stipulates a significantly increased level of provincial autonomy, both in political and fiscal terms. Specifically, the Constitution foresees that 40% of domestic revenues should be retained by the provinces, and significant government functions (e.g., primary and secondary education, primary health care) should be transferred to the province level.¹ Another 10% of revenues are to be distributed among the provinces through a development equalization fund, which will fund investments in provincial and local infrastructure.

In this context, the government launched the Information and Communication Technology for Governance (ICT4GOV) program in 2009 in South Kivu province, with the support of the World Bank Institute (WBI). The program aimed to facilitate decentralization by empowering stakeholders to participate in the process of participatory budgeting through the use of ICT. This initiative built upon a governance diagnostic assessment conducted in South Kivu, which also provided an entry point to forge relationships and bring together stakeholders within the country to promote and engage in governance reforms.

The analysis of the objectives, change process and results in this case study is based on WBI’s Capacity Development and Results Framework.²

Constraints and capacity development challenges

The governance diagnostics and stakeholder discussions identified a series of challenges that needed to be addressed for improving governance and service delivery at the local level, such as

asymmetry in information, low level of understanding of budget procedures and low engagement with civil society. The diagnostics indicated that participatory budgeting, as a social accountability mechanism, could potentially be a promising entry point for broader governance reform in the country.

The government considered participatory budgeting particularly promising in the South Kivu province because of the communities' interest to engage in such a process. Analyses conducted at the beginning of the initiative showed that communities in South Kivu had a strong motivation to be part of the decision-making process since they felt they were left behind from the capital, Kinshasa. Moreover, South Kivu already had a critical mass of skilled and educated people, in part because many people from Rwanda were commuting to study there. The initiative sought to build on these capacities to help empower communities to increase their voice in the decision-making process.

The diagnostics also indicated that ICT would facilitate the process of citizen and government engagement and access to information so as to hold government accountable. However, ICT was just a supplementary channel of engagement since the initiative did not focus exclusively on it.

On the basis of these conditions and challenges, the main objectives of the capacity development intervention were to:

- Strengthen the accountability relationship between citizens and governments.
- Increase citizens' voice in decision-making processes through the use of ICT.
- Increase local governments' responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Diagram 1 illustrates the link between the main goal, constraints and objectives of the capacity development intervention in DRC.

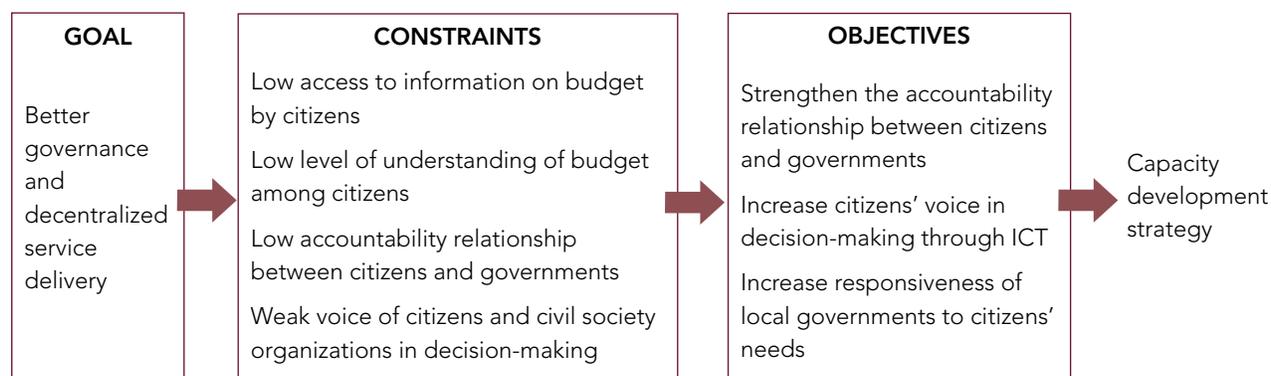
Design and activities of the capacity development initiative

The capacity development strategy was mainly based on a learning approach and included trainings, workshop coaching and knowledge exchange. These activities aimed to provide local stakeholders (e.g., civil servants, CSOs) with the technical and organizational capability to effectively implement participatory budgeting processes and the use of ICT. Therefore, capacity development activities targeting both demand and supply side are crucial.

Given that participatory budgeting is a process of engagement among different stakeholders, the project activities aimed at strengthening collaboration and setting the foundation for a multi-stakeholder coalition mainly between citizens and governments so as to build trust in the process and between each other. This process of coalition- and trust-building is crucial for both citizens and governments. In regards to the government, "Studies in many countries have revealed that whilst local government officials might be well trained as economists, finance experts, engineers, planners, environmentalists and other technical fields, not many are interested in developing skills in communications, listening, or getting exposed to participatory processes in general" (Matovu 2006, p.7).

Public officials needed to be exposed to participatory approaches and methods to improve the quality of interaction with communities. Specifically, there was a need to improve their competencies in areas such as public relations, negotiation,

Diagram 1. ICT4GOV goal, constraints and objectives



ICT4GOV capacity development activities

The capacity development initiative featured a range of activities implemented in eight decentralized territorial entities in South Kivu.

Trainings and workshops

- In February 2010, the government held a capacity building workshop on participatory budgeting to build the conditions for citizen engagement in the budget process and to increase civil society knowledge and skills on how to formulate a budget. More than 50 key actors from the provincial and local governments, civil society, local IT companies and academia participated.
- In February 2011, the government held sets of different workshops on the principles, challenges and opportunities of participatory budgeting and to set up a calendar of activities. Provincial governments and eight municipalities and civil society attended.
- The government held a workshop in 2011 with civil society on how to disseminate the information about participatory budgeting and mobilize citizens to participate.
- CSOs organized a series of workshops to explain participatory budgeting to citizens.
- In an April 2011 training, public financial management specialists taught principles of public financial management to administration and civil society.

Sensitization

- CSOs were the main organizers for a series of information and awareness-raising activities to motivate local government officials, service providers and citizens to participate in the pilot projects.

Technical assistance, mentoring and coaching

- CSOs provided a series of coaching sessions to local elected officials, public servants, CSO and IT service providers on participatory budgeting and ICT usage.
- WBI facilitated a coaching program to members of the ICT4Kivu team, a group of volunteers at the local university formed in the framework of the project. The program aimed to ensure ICT elements necessary for the deployment of the pilots were fully tested and operational in a timely manner.

Citizen engagement

- CSOs and the media worked extensively with cross sections of community groups, community leaders and elders, women, youth and marginalized social groups during project implementation to ensure a large scale of community mobilization and participation. To ensure that the poor and disadvantaged social groups participated in the social accountability project, a series of outreach activities were held with representatives of CSOs to promote the inclusiveness of the process to groups traditionally excluded from governance processes in the local context, such as women, youth and the pygmy population.
- IT was crucial for citizen engagement. For instance, Short Message Service texts (SMS) were used to invite, mobilize and sensitize the population on participatory budgeting but also as a way of simplifying voting procedures.

Networking

- Regarding the use of ICT—and mobile technology in particular—the Université Catholique du Bukavu (UCB) and the steering committee committed to cooperate. (The committee is a multi-stakeholder body comprising government, academia and others formed for participatory budgeting in the region.) In the framework of this cooperation, members of the Management and ICT Department of UCB committed to participate in a working group focused on using ICT as a means to enhance citizen participation in the participatory budgeting process. Beyond the function of promoting knowledge exchange between the participants and thus reinforcing local capacities, the ultimate function of this group—ICT4Kivu—is to work with the steering committee toward the development of ICT solutions for the pilots.
- WBI facilitated the establishment of an international network of ICT experts to provide technical assistance to the home-based ICT4Kivu team.

mediation, listening, consensus-building, confidence-building and priority-setting that come into play in participatory management, and which are not part of the curricula in traditional planning and budgeting practices.

Change process and enhancement of the stakeholder ownership dimension

The preliminary results of this initiative are already impressive. The capacity development intervention created the conditions for setting up a participatory budget process in the DRC for the first time.

How did the activities described above contribute to such a change in the South Kivu province? The set of project activities aimed at raising awareness, enhancing skills and building multi-stakeholder coalitions had a strong impact on all of the stakeholders, which involved:

- A change in the ability and motivation of provincial governments and local governments to adopt and institutionalize participatory budgeting and to engage with citizens.
- A change in the ability and motivation of citizens to participate in participatory budgeting and hold governments accountable.
- A change in the ability of CSOs to train stakeholders and mobilize citizens to participate in participatory budgeting.

One of the most tangible results of these activities was the buy-in and commitment from the provincial government to support participatory budgeting by the local governments. A major initial constraint to the implementation of participatory budgeting pilots was the absence of financial transfers from the provincial government of South-Kivu to the local governments that would enable a participatory process to be carried out at the local level (that was mandated by law but not respected).

According to local government officials, as a result of the discussions during and subsequent to the February 2010 workshop, the provincial government started, for the first time, to transfer funds to the local level on a regular basis. At the end of the workshop, CSOs and members of the local government willing to adopt participatory budgeting spontaneously signed a "common declaration". In an interview, the councilor of the ministry of budget in South Kivu, Jean Bunani, said, "After receiving

trainings in April 2010 and after the seminar held in August 2010, the province decided to elaborate the budget in a participatory fashion for 2012 and stated that the law would be respected" (Weber 2011).

Therefore, a process of negotiation and raising awareness on the potential benefits of participatory budgeting was crucial for provincial governments to better understand the potential benefits of the process in terms of political visibility and legitimacy, less tax evasion, etc. The provincial government took strong ownership of the process from the beginning and started organizing its own workshops to relay its newly acquired knowledge to all local communities in this large province with many remote rural populations.

Taking this process one step further, in April 2011, the ministry of budget institutionalized the participatory budgeting process in the province as a mandatory process for all local governments.

This substantial shift in the government's behavior is significant considering that local governments now must submit a part of their investment budget and give up part of their power to citizens who can decide where the money should go. In a meeting with civil society, one of the mayors said, "From now on as we receive funds we allocate 50% of the funds to investment in participatory budget so that people can see the benefits of it" (WBIGV 2011d).

Another precondition for participatory budgeting to work in the province was the commitment and ability of local governments to engage with citizens. That was made possible because the provincial government itself demanded it as a condition to transfer money to the local level. Mandating citizen participation and engaging with citizens was a formula that helped break down the barrier preventing the transfer of funds to local governments. It built trust on the side of the provincial government that local governments would appropriately use the transferred funds.

The process of building multi-stakeholder coalitions was extremely important for building the confidence of stakeholders in the process. For instance, a new multi-stakeholder steering committee included representatives from officials, CSOs, academia and IT service providers. Multiple stakeholders who participated in the process observed

that an increased trust in local and provincial government built through this participatory mechanism mobilized additional resources, since more citizens are paying their taxes and the transfer of funds from the provincial to the local level has increased significantly. This creates a cycle of building trust in the process as government becomes more responsive and citizens participate and pay taxes.

Perhaps the most striking result of the initiative is that for the first time in DRC people have the opportunity to actively participate in the decision-making process. They decide where the public money should go and what to do with it, and their decision is final. In this vein, they now “own” the process of defining their priorities. A citizen of Bagira in South-Kivu said, “What I like the most about participatory budgeting is the participation... and the transparency. Before I did not know how much money our city made. Now I know how much we have collected in tax, how much we have spent. And we have a say in how this money is spent” (Weber 2011).

The ICT4GOV team recognizes that the ownership and appropriation by local communities of this process was strong from the beginning. Communities participate in the process and mobilize other people to participate as well. Increasingly, people see the benefits of the process, such as women participating for the first time in meetings where they add their concerns and needs to the list of priorities. The councilor of the ministry of budget said, “People have realized that funds are arriving and are being used to respond to their needs” (Weber 2011). Not only do citizens vote on the budget allocation priorities but they also get to oversee the budget execution process through elected delegates.

Media and ICT have played a crucial role in facilitating the process and mobilizing citizens to participate. Mobile phones have been used in the following manner:

- Participants living in a given area are informed via SMS when a meeting is going to take place in their district.
- Citizens can vote through SMS, indicating their preferences of public works via a pre-established number of options (e.g., reform health center, school). Citizens who attended the deliberative (face-to-face) assemblies choose these pre-established options.

- Citizens are informed via SMS on the status of the different public works that have been selected (e.g., initiated, under execution, finalized).
- Citizens can provide feedback via SMS on the quality of projects that have been executed or are under execution.

To take further advantage of ICT in DRC, the ICT-4Kivu team started geo-referencing public facilities throughout the city of Bukavu to generate a map that can help inform the decision-making process for budget allocations.

Development results

Preliminary development results from assessment studies coming out of this initiative are already encouraging.³ Selected interim results of the process include budgets being elaborated in a more realistic manner and more closely aligned with previous mobilization of resources—rather than “wishful thinking” budgets. For the first time, local governments are reserving parts of their budgets for investment spending, rather than allocating funds exclusively to salaries and equipment. Local governments are committing percentages of their budgets to basic services for the poor. Also for the first time, local budgets are not exclusively reserved for the administrative expenses of local governments. There has also been an increase in the transfer of funds from the provincial to the local level.

As mentioned in the previous section, as trust in local government is built through the participatory mechanism citizens are paying more in taxes. A dramatic reduction of tax evasion at the local level (fiscal year 2011) has occurred, with citizens more willing to pay taxes as they link government spending to improvement in the delivery of services. In some cases, local tax collection has increased up to 20 times since the process has started.

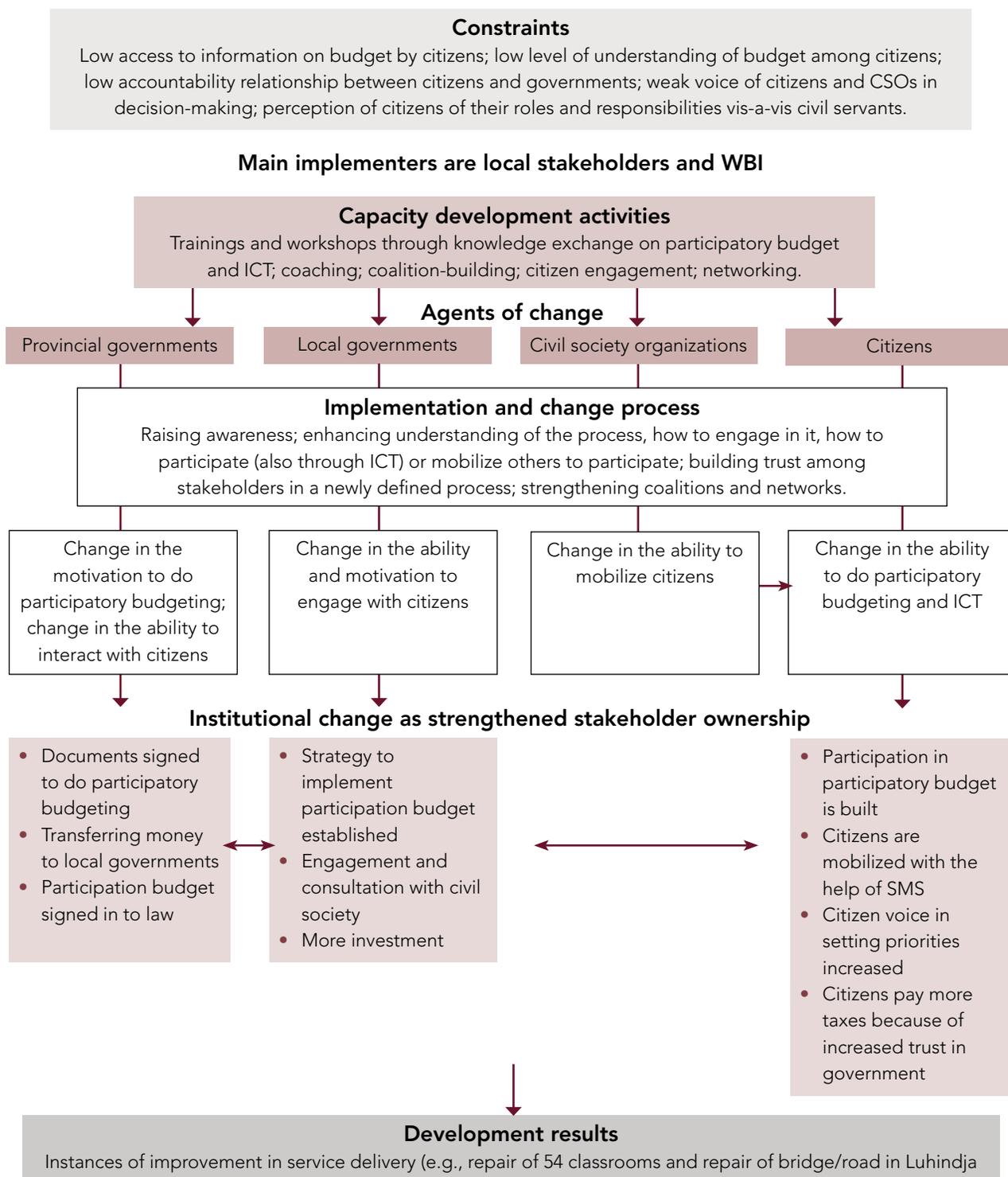
As another consequence of participatory budgeting, there are some instances of improvement in service delivery in the province, such as a repair of 54 classrooms and repair of a bridge/road in Luhindja (Weber 2011). Through this participatory process citizens decided to renovate schools and build bridges and water fountains in their local communities. The councilor of the ministry of budget said, “We saw in the neighborhoods

sewage works being done or communities homes being built” (Weber 2011).

Diagram 2 illustrates the added value of capacity development in South Kivu by using WBI’s Capacity Development and Results Framework to articulate the results chain and change process taking

place in that province. Rather than suggesting that capacity development efforts are linear, this diagram illustrates the relationship between these efforts and demand for accountability and development results. Moreover, this diagram should be seen more as a continuum as it is also through participation that citizens increased their awareness.

Diagram 2. ICT4GOV theory of change



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¹ The administrative structure of DCR is divided into 11 regions, or provinces, including the city of Kinshasa. The regions are subdivided into sub-regions, which are divided into administrative zones, which are further divided into collectivities. Each collectivity contains groupings, which in turn contain numerous villages.

² WBI's Capacity Development and Results Framework supports the definition and measurement of strategic objectives, change processes and results chains for capacity development interventions.

³ Two final summative evaluations were conducted toward the end of 2011. An IT expert will assess the ICT dimension. An independent evaluator (from the Center of Social Studies and author of the latest World Report on participatory budgeting) will also evaluate the participatory budgeting pilot process in South Kivu.